



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

*Bringing the University to You*

## Fact Sheet-03-57

### Humboldt County Needs Assessment: Youth

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#### Overview of Humboldt County

Humboldt County is located in north central Nevada, largely north of Interstate 80. The county covers 9,658 mi<sup>2</sup> with the Federal government administering about 81% of the land base. Winnemucca is the only incorporated city, and small outlying communities include Golconda, McDermitt, Paradise Valley, Orovada, Kings River, and Denio. Small acreage developments occur in Grass Valley and at Paradise Hill.

The countywide population in 2000 was 16,106. In 2002, the estimated population was 15,004, due to a decline in the mining industry from low gold prices. The population in Winnemucca is about 7,000, with another 5,000 to 6,000 residents in nearby unincorporated (small acreage) areas. The remainder of the population occurs in widespread ranching and farming communities, or as isolated ranches and farms. The county has a socio-political split along urban and rural lines.

Local economics are heavily dependent on the mining and agricultural industries. Mining is the largest economic activity, but is substantially more volatile than agriculture. Humboldt County is the largest agricultural producing county in Nevada. In 1997 there were at least 218 farms and ranches and over 733,000 acres in production. The market value of agricultural products was over \$57 million. Stability (strength) in the agricultural sector undoubtedly provides economic stability throughout the county, which should benefit youth.

Humboldt County has a wide array of services available to address youth issues. These include the Community Action Team (C.A.T.), Committee Against Family Violence, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Child Restraint Systems, the Family Resource Center, the 1st Way Pregnancy Center, and the Humboldt County Juvenile Probation and Youth Services Agency. The latter provides programs related to substance abuse, mental health, and education. The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension oversees the implementation of Project Magic. This program intervenes with first-time offenders (non-violent) to teach skills designed to help them get out of the juvenile justice system and become productive members of the community. The program's focus is enhancing the youth's social and interpersonal skills for communication, problem solving,

decision-making, self-responsibility, conflict resolution, goal setting and aspiration building.

#### Needs Assessment

Faculty in the College of Cooperative Extension must conduct a formal needs assessment in their geographic area of responsibility. The Extension Educator in Winnemucca is responsible for conducting a needs assessment for Humboldt County. The assessment may include data from surveys, focus groups, public meetings, newspapers, minutes from meetings, or other sources. The results should identify issues (needs) important to residents of Humboldt County, and should help define education and research program needs.

A comprehensive needs assessment across all segments of the community had not previously been completed. During the summer and early fall of 2001 the Extension Educator attended a variety of community meetings and met with representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service, and Nevada Department of Agriculture, local government officials, and individuals from throughout the community to learn about current issues. Information from these encounters was used to develop six general areas where Cooperative Extension could develop education and research programming. These were:

- Community Development
- Crop Production
- Livestock Production
- Rangeland/Natural Resources
- Urban Horticulture
- Youth Development

The Extension Educator developed a survey in December 2001 to address specific issues for each topic. Each survey participant was asked to rate the issues' importance from low (1) to high (5), or don't know. The survey was structured so respondents could be classified by their type of employment, and/or all respondents combined. Respondents were also prompted to provide written comments for issues/concerns the survey did not address. The survey was mailed to 485 residences in Humboldt County.

Each anonymous response was assigned a unique identification number, and the data entered into a spreadsheet.

The 14 types of employment were reclassified into 6 categories to obtain sufficient samples for analyses. These categories are farmers, ranchers, business owners/managers, government/education workers, industry/retail workers, and other (typically retired). The results are reported two ways: 1) the percent of all respondents that rated an issue very high/high (4 or 5), very low/low (1 or 2), neutral (3) or don't know; and 2) the average importance rating (1 to 5) for each topic by type of employment. Of the 485 surveys mailed, 161 were returned resulting in a response rate of 33%. This is well above average for an unsolicited mail survey.

The length and detail of the mail survey requires that results be reported in multiple fact sheets. This fact sheet reports results for Youth Development. Other fact sheets report about livestock production, crop production, community development and urban horticulture, and rangeland resources.

## Results

Figure 1 shows how all respondents rated the importance of youth issues in Humboldt County. Over 80% of respondents felt literacy was the most important issue for youth development. Fewer than 10% thought education programs for literacy have a low/very low importance. The development of employment skills for non-college bound youth was the second most important issue. Seventy eight percent of respondents identified this issue as important/very important. Two additional issues most respondents selected as important/very important were reducing illegal drugs/narcotics and Agriculture in the Classroom.

Sixty percent or more of the respondents identified the following issues as important/very important: teen pregnancy, programs for rural youth, the Future Farmers of America Program, alcohol consumption, after school and/or summer programs, risk reduction prior to committing first criminal offense, and creating agricultural education opportunities for urban youth in the 4-H program. About half of the respondents felt developing new 4-H programs for urban youth was an important/very important issue. More respondents (19%) rated this issue low/very low importance than any other issue. Project Magic was rated important/very important by 23% of respondents, but 50% of respondents were unaware or unfamiliar with the program. Another 14% had neutral opinions.

None of the issues described in the survey were considered unimportant by more than 19% of respondents. In general, only about 10% to 12% of respondents felt most youth related topics had a low/very low importance.

When the results are stratified by type of employment (Figure 2) several patterns emerge. First, the strong countywide support for literacy holds across all employment groups, although ranchers and farmers rate the importance a little less than other groups. Second, individuals employed by government, education and industry generally rate the development of employment skills for non-college bound youth as more important than do ranchers and farmers. Third, farmers and ranchers generally give their highest importance ratings to programs that directly reflect their livelihood. These include the Agriculture in the Classroom, the FFA program, and 4-H traditional club programs. Fourth, residents that

typically work and/or live in urban environments (business owners, government/education, industry, and other) rate issues typically viewed as urban youth problems (e.g., youth alcohol consumption, after school programs, drug and narcotic use, youth violence, criminal risk reduction, teen pregnancy) as more important than farmers and ranchers.

## Discussion and Summary

Youth literacy is an important issue in Humboldt County. The county library system routinely promotes programs to enhance reading among youth, particularly pre-schoolers and those in the early grades. The library conducts a story-time program for pre-K youth throughout the year. Also, there are summer reading programs that provide youth rewards based on the number of books they read. Finally, the county has bookmobile service to many of the rural communities. The Humboldt County Juvenile Probation and Youth Services Agency also provides a summer reading program and after school tutoring (K-12th grade).

The second most important issue concerned improving employment skills for non-college bound youth. A variety of skills are provided by the Job Opportunities in Nevada Program (JOIN). The Great Basin College Adult Learning Center provides programs to 17- and 18-year-old youth to improve their proficiency in daily communication and employment skills. At this time there are very limited formal opportunities for developing high-level trade skills in the industrial and mechanical arts. The large number of skilled trades needed to support mining, agriculture, and construction industries (in and beyond Humboldt County) suggests that establishing a trade school may have merit.

Numerous local programs address youth at risk issues (e.g., drinking, drugs, and pregnancy). The Community Action Team (C.A.T.) addresses teen pregnancy prevention and attempts to reduce adolescent sexual risks. The local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving offers services related to under age drinking and the hazards of drinking and driving. The Family Resource Center, the Humboldt County Juvenile Probation Department, and the Youth Services Agency address alcohol, tobacco, and drug issues. Youth education needs about agriculture and natural resources are met several ways. Starting in 2002 all third graders in Humboldt County participate in Agriculture in the Classroom (coordinated by Farm Bureau). This program includes a field day where youth visit with producers and receive hands-on education about livestock and crop production. All fourth graders participate in Ecology Day (coordinated by Cooperative Extension) where they learn about various natural resource issues. This program was partially revamped in 2003 based on input from fourth grade teachers, and is likely to undergo further change in coming years. The FFA program at Lowry High School has been small for many years in comparison to programs in Elko and Churchill counties. A new advisor at Lowry High School since September 2002 has established a program that is growing and strengthening. Other FFA programs in Nevada have active education curricula for Range and Soil Judging and Wildlife Habitat Evaluation. In Humboldt County, these programs have substantial potential to increase agricultural and natural resource education opportunities for urban youth, provided adult leaders/advisors can be found. Humboldt

Figure 1. Countywide (all respondents) importance ratings about youth issues in Humboldt County.

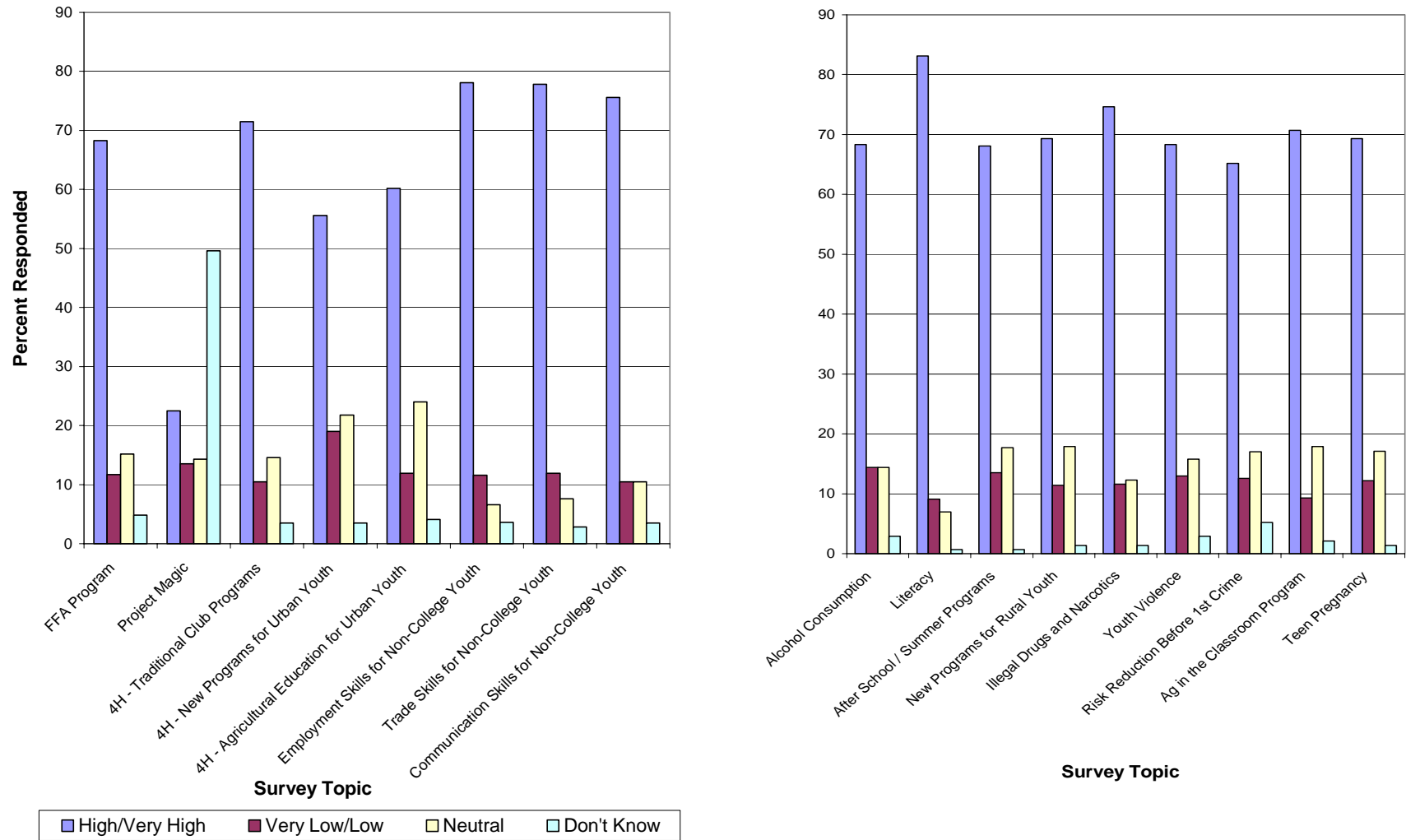
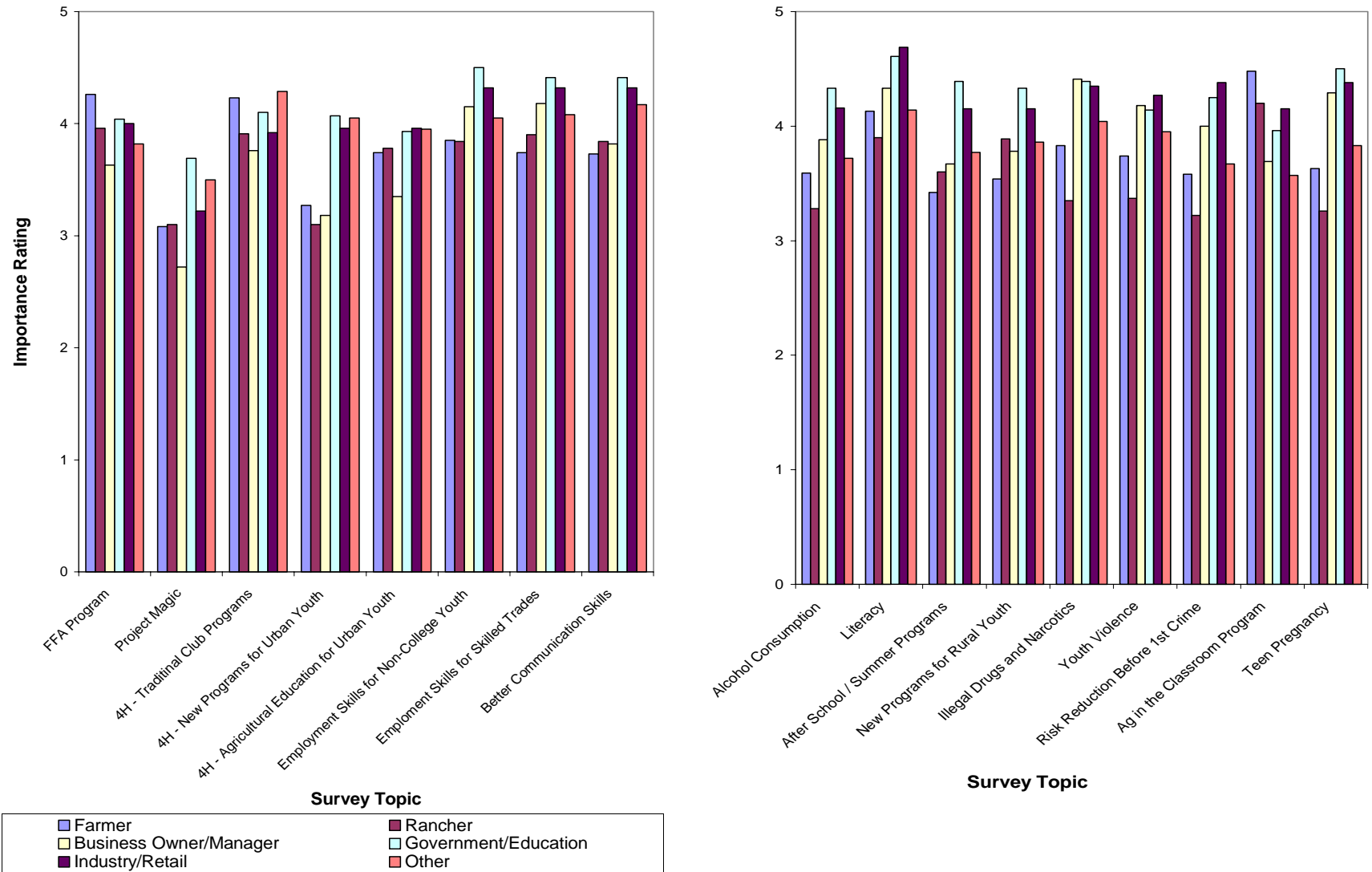


Figure 2. Importance rating of youth issues in Humboldt County by type of employment.



County maintains an active 4-H program (171 youth in 2003) split between traditional livestock programs, small animal programs (cats, rabbits, poultry, etc.) and static programs (leather, sewing, etc.).

A very high percent of respondents (64%) had no opinion about whether Project Magic was an important or unimportant issue. This indicates most residents are not aware of Project Magic, despite it having received national awards. The percent of respondents who rated Project Magic as a low/very low importance was similar to that for all other issues. This suggests few respondents believed the time, energy, and funds directed toward Project Magic are poor investments. The high ratings for issues related to alcohol, drugs and narcotics, youth violence, and risk reduction for conducting criminal offenses suggest respondents would have strong support for Project Magic if they understood its mission, goals, and objectives.

Data based on type of employment suggests that individuals tend to provide more support toward those issues that reflect how they make their living, which typically relates to their work and living location (i.e., urban vs. rural), and the type of problems their children are likely to experience or be exposed to (Figure 2). Farmers and ranchers generally rate

youth education programs for agriculture and natural resources as more important than education programs directed toward youth at risk. Conversely, those employed by government, education, and industry are more likely to rank youth at risk more important than education programs about agriculture and natural resources. The pattern for business owners and managers is less clear. For some issues they responded similar to farmers and ranchers. On other issues they had responses similar to respondents employed by government, education, and industry. Respondents employed by government, education, and industry, and to a lesser degree, business owners/managers ranked developing employment skills for non-college bound youth more important than did ranchers and farmers. Any attempt to communicate with residents about youth issues and/or scheduling education programs for youth is difficult because their parents (as participants or transport providers) have very different preferences about how to correspond with program providers (Table 1), their preference for program formats (Table 2), and the times they are most likely to attend programs (Table 3). More would attend education programs based in Winnemucca than at other locations (Table 4).

**Table 1.** Preferred methods for communicating problems, concerns, and needs with the UNCE office in Humboldt County. Values are percent within work types who had a high or very high preference for the specific method.

Method	Countywide	Farmer	Rancher	Business Owner/Manager	Government/ Education	Industry/ Retail	Other
Regular Meetings	52	54	57	35	52	68	37
Phone Conversations	41	35	50	38	39	54	33
Email	40	33	21	27	44	63	42
On-site Visits	56	75	59	44	45	60	58
Open Houses	55	44	38	29	54	80	77

**Table 2.** Preference for delivery of education programs by specific formats. Values are percent of respondents by work type who wanted education programs delivered by specific format.

Program Format	Countywide	Farmer	Rancher	Business Owner/Manager	Government/ Education	Industry/ Retail	Other
Seminar	75	86	83	80	71	70	59
Workshop	90	91	90	100	82	91	90
Field Day	76	81	69	60	73	75	95
Field Tour	79	91	90	71	70	65	95
Newsletter	84	96	95	81	83	74	76
Fact Sheet	85	95	100	80	89	70	75
Newspaper	70	57	73	71	82	63	56
Web Site	69	57	53	60	81	83	63
Demonstration Site	83	80	90	63	93	78	84

**Table 3.** Preference for receiving education programs at a specific time of year, day of the week, and time of day. First value is the percent of respondents that answered yes, and the second value in ( ) is the percent that responded no. The remaining balance was neutral responses.

	Countywide	Farmer	Rancher	Business Owner/Manager	Government/ Education	Industry/ Retail	Other
<b>Best time of year</b>							
Sept.-Oct.	26 (28)	19 (57)	35 (24)	21 (14)	25 (29)	46 (9)	6 (29)
Nov.-Feb.	50 (13)	91 (0)	74 (0)	43 (7)	42 (21)	19 (33)	28 (6)
March-May	39 (23)	19 (48)	12 (47)	28 (27)	58 (8)	62 (10)	47 (5)
June-August	19 (45)	10 (85)	7 (60)	14 (36)	14 (46)	32 (32)	24 (12)
<b>Best Time of Week</b>							
Monday or Friday	28 (25)	29 (29)	24 (24)	27 (20)	32 (36)	37 (16)	12 (18)
Tuesday-Thursday	48 (11)	76 (0)	47 (16)	33 (20)	54 (12)	29 (14)	45 (0)
Weekend	27 (36)	11 (56)	17 (39)	27 (27)	42 (25)	40 (35)	12 (41)
<b>Best time of day</b>							
Workday (8-5)	40 (40)	67 (10)	56 (19)	23 (39)	35 (39)	32 (32)	29 (18)
Early Evening (5-7)	51 (15)	36 (32)	59 (18)	50 (19)	68 (8)	52 (14)	33 (0)
Late Evening (7-10)	25 (50)	30 (65)	27 (67)	33 (42)	26 (2)	25 (35)	6 (38)

**Table 4.** Preference for having education programs in respective communities in Humboldt County. Values are percent of respondents who rated the location high/very high.

Location	Countywide	Farmer	Rancher	Business Owner/Manager	Government/ Education	Industry/ Retail	Other
Winnemucca	82	74	65	77	93	96	81
Paradise Valley	48	24	59	53	54	52	43
Orovada	51	73	57	29	40	38	45
McDermitt	41	24	40	29	61	48	38
Kings River	36	32	35	29	46	33	37
Denio	33	14	33	29	50	32	35

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